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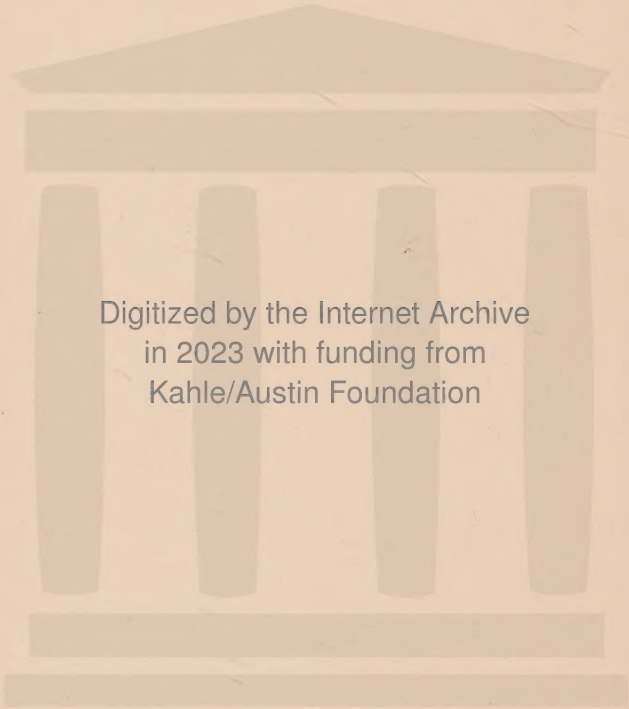
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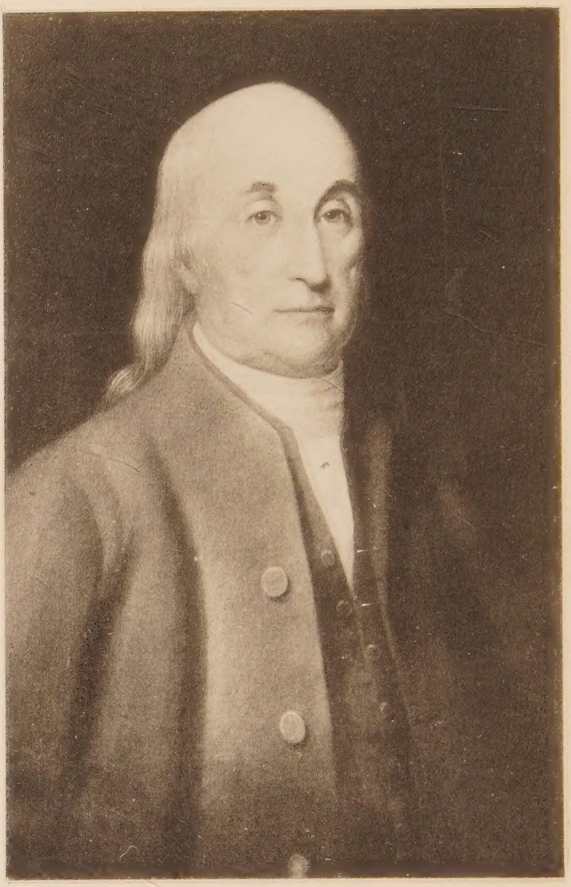

MEMORANDUM

WRITTEN

BY

William Rotch

IN THE EIGHTIETH YEAR

OF HIS AGE.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1916

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Published June 1916

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THOUGH a man of some prominence in his day and a member of a family still well known and honored in Massachusetts, the writer of this "Memorandum" is unnoticed in most books of reference, and it seems fitting to preface his reminiscences on their first appearance in book form with a brief account of his life.

William Rotch was a Nantucket Quaker, born on the island, October 15, 1734. He carried on a large whaling and shipping business in Nantucket, which was for many years the third largest port of New England. Though he was a man of peace, his fortunes were closely connected with the fortunes of war. While

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visiting London in 1773 he chartered three of his ships to the East India Company, and these ships — the Dartmouth, the Beaver, and the Bedford — brought the tea to Boston and furnished the scene of the "Boston Tea Party," one of the early outbreaks of the revolutionary spirit in New England. When the Revolution actually came it made serious trouble for the peace-loving inhabitants of Nantucket, who did their best to preserve their neutrality and keep the whaling industry alive to supply the world with oil. How William Rotch met these difficulties he himself relates in his "Memorandum." He was successful both during and after the war, and his ship Bedford was the first vessel to carry the American flag into a British port, when, on February 6, 1783, she reported at the London custom-house with a cargo of oil. There is a story that one of her crew, a hunchback, while on shore one day, was clapped on the back by a British sailor, who said, "Hello, Jack, what have

you got here?" to which the Yankee replied, "Bunker Hill, and be d—d to you!"

It may be worth while to note that William Rotch's son Benjamin, who accompanied his father on his mission to England and France, related two interesting anecdotes which are not included in the "Memorandum." One of these is to the effect that when Mr. Rotch had completed his arrangements for sailing to France, Lord Hawkesbury sent word to him desiring another interview, and that the Quaker's reply was as follows: "If Lord Hawkesbury wishes to meet William Rotch, he will find him on board the ship Maria until the hour when the ship takes her anchor." The other story is that, during the visit to the royal chapel in Paris, the king himself, who shared the prevailing curiosity to see the wealthy Quaker, was present incog.

As related in the "Memorandum," William Rotch in 1795 removed to New Bedford, which was afterwards for many years the leading

whaling port of the world. Here he lived until his death on May 16, 1828. He was a man of the highest principles, much respected and loved wherever he was known.

BOSTON, *April*, 1916.

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A FRIEND of mine has repeatedly requested me to put on paper some of the occurrences of about Twenty Years of my life from 1775 to 1794 which he had heard me relate in conversation.

When the Revolutionary War begun in 1775 I saw clearly that the only line of conduct to be pursued by us, the Inhabitants of the Island of Nantucket was to take no part in the contest,

and to endeavor to give no occasion of offence to either of the contending Powers.

A great portion of the Inhabitants were of the Denomination of Friends, and a large number of the considerate of other Societies united in the opinion that our safety was in a state of Neutrality as far as it could be obtained, though we had no doubt that suffering would be our lot, which we often experienced from both parties. Our situation was rendered more difficult by having a few restless Spirits amongst us, who had nothing to lose, and who were often thwarting our pacific plan, and subjecting us to danger, not caring what confusion they brought upon us, if they could get something in the scramble.

My own trials begun soon after the War broke out. In the year 1764 I had taken the Goods of a Merchant in Boston, deceased insolvent, who was Deeply indebted to me.

Among these were a number of muskets, some with, and others without bayonets. The

straights of Belleisle opened a new field for the Whale Fishery, where wild fowl were abundant, and my Guns met with a rapid sale. Whenever those with Bayonets were chosen, I took that Instrument from them. The purchaser would insist on having it, as an appendage belonging to the Gun, and I as strenuously withheld it, and laid them all by. Many Years afterwards I removed to another store, leaving much rubbish in the one I had left. Among the rubbish were these Bayonets, neglected and forgotten; until the War commenced, when to my surprise they were brought into view by an application for them, made by a person from the Continent.

The time was now come to endeavor to support our Testimony against War, or abandon it, as this very instrument was a severe test. I could not hesitate which to choose, and therefore denied the applicant. My reason for not furnishing them was demanded, to which I readily answered, "As this instrument is pur-

posely made and used for the destruction of mankind, I can put no weapon into a man's hand to destroy another, that I cannot use myself in the same way" — The person left me much dissatisfied. Others came, and received the same denial. It made a great noise in the Country, and my life was threatened. I would gladly have beaten them into "pruning hooks," but I took an early opportunity of throwing them into the sea.

A short time after I was called before a Committee appointed by the Court then held at Watertown near Boston, and questioned amongst other things respecting my Bayonets.

I gave a full account of my proceedings, and closed it with saying, "I sunk them in the bottom of the sea, I did it from principle, I have ever been glad that I had done it, and if I am wrong I am to be pitied." The Chairman of the Committee Major Hawley (a worthy character) then addressed the Committee, and said "I believe Mr. Rotch has given us a candid

account, and everyman has a right to act consistently with his religious principles, but I am sorry that we could not have the Bayonets, for we want them very much."

The Major was desirous of knowing more of our principles on which I informed him as far as he enquired.

One of the Committee in a pert manner observed "then your principles are passive Obedience and non-resistance." I replied "No my friend, our principles are active Obedience, or passive suffering." I had passed this no small trial respecting my Bayonets, but the clamor against me long continued.

From the Year 1775 to the end of the War, we were in continual embarrassments — Our Vessels captured by the English, and our small vessels and boats sent to the various parts of the Continent for provisions, denied, and sent back empty, under pretence that we supplied the British, which was without the least foundation. Prohibitory Laws were often made in

consequence of these unfounded reports. By this inhuman conduct we were sometimes in danger of being starved. One of these Laws was founded on an information from Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, who had been imposed upon respecting our conduct in supplying the British.

I wrote to the Governor on the subject, and laid our distress very home to him, assuring him at the same time that nothing of that kind had taken place. He was convinced of his error, and was ever after very kind in assisting us within his jurisdiction.

But there were so many petty Officers, as Committees of Safety, Inspection, etc. in all parts, and too many of them chosen much upon the principle of Jeroboam's Priests, that we were sorely afflicted.

It was about the year 1778 when the current in the Country was very strong against us at Nantucket, the vessels we sent after provisions, sent back empty, and great suffering for want

of food was likely to take place, that the people who thought we ought to have joined in the War (not Friends) began to chide and murmur against *me.* They considered me the principal cause that we did not unite in the War (which I knew was measureably the case,) when we might have been plentifully supplied, but were now likely to starve, little considering that if we had taken a part, there was nothing but supernatural aid (which we had no reason to expect) that could have prevented our destruction.

Though I had done everything in my power for our preservation, this murmuring of the people operated so severely upon my spirits, that I was once (a time never to be forgotten) on the point of asking of that Divine Being who gave me life, that he would take it from me, for my affliction seemed more than I could bear. But being restrained by that good hand, which had so often been my deliverer, after shedding a flood of tears, my mind was more easy, and my spirit revived.

In the Year 1779 seven armed Vessels and Transports with soldiers from Newport came to us, the latter commanded by George Leonard, an American, as were his troops in general, having joined the English. They plundered us of much property, some from me, but a considerable amount from Thomas Jenkins. While they were plundering his store, I attempted to pass the Guard they had set, being desirous to see Leonard, and intercede with him to desist. But the Guard arrested my progress with the Bayonet. After some time Timothy Folger succeeded in speaking to him, and advised him to go off, for the people would not bear it much longer. He took the hint, and retired much enraged.

We soon had information that Leonard & Co. were preparing another and a more formidable expedition to visit us. The Town was convened to consult what measures should be taken in this trying emergency, which resulted in sending Dr. Benjamin Tupper, Samuel Starbuck and

COUNTING-HOUSE OF WILLIAM ROTCH & SONS IN NANTUCKET

myself to Newport, to represent our case to the Commanders of the Navy and Army. We arrived in the harbor of Newport, where Captain Dawson commanded the Navy, and General Prescott the Army.

But the American Refugees had made interest with the General not to suffer us to land, and we were ordered by Dawson to depart. We interceded with him to let us stay a little longer, for we found the Expedition was progressing rapidly, and unless we could arrest it, it would be in vain to proceed to New York. Dawson by request of General Prescott, under the influence of the Refugees, ordered our immediate departure again. Dr. Tupper now for the first time went on board, and in his plain blunt way, after the usual ceremony of entry, addressed him in this manner —

"You order us to depart. We cannot be frightened away, nor *will* we depart. We know the extent of your authority. You may make a prize of our vessel, and imprison us — much

better for us to be thus treated, than to be sent away. We came here for peace, and you ought to encourage everything of this kind," etc. —— His reasons made such an impression on Captain Dawson, that he gave us liberty to stay as long as we pleased —— The Refugee Boat came several times to us, to get us [to go] off —— We insisted on going on shore, but they as often refused us. After this conversation with Dawson, the Boat came again, and Dr. Tupper insisted that he would go on shore —— They still denied him unless he intended to stay with them. As he was not always exact in his expressions, to answer his purpose he says "Well, I am going to stay," and almost forcibly got into their Boat, and went on shore, being satisfied that if he could once see the General, he could in this respect destroy the influence of the Refugees. He accordingly got liberty for Samuel Starbuck to come on shore, and the next day for me to follow. We found it necessary to be in friendship with the

Refugees, that if possible we might stop the current of their intended predatory visit.

I got on shore in the afternoon, and found that I must wait on General Prescot. —— Knowing his brittle temper, and it being in the *afternoon* I almost dreaded to appear in his presence. However, let my treatment be what it would, I wished it over and accordingly went.

I was introduced to him by one of his Aids — He received me very cordially, gave me his hand, and said "Mr. Rotch will you have some dinner? —— I can give you good bread, though the Rebels say we have none." I thanked him saying I had dined —— "Well, will you take a glass of wine?" I answered "I have no objection if thou canst put up with my plain way" —— The glass was filled, with his own, and those of all the Officers at table —— as a stranger introduced, they all drank to me before I put the glass to my lips —— I then observed to the General, "As I mentioned before

if thou couldst put up with my plain way, I was willing to take wine with thee, but as we as a society disuse these ceremonies, I have always found it best to keep to my profession, let me be in what Company I may. Therefore I hope my not making a like return will not be accepted as any mark of disrespect, for I assure thee it is not the case." His answer was, "Oh, no, if a Quaker will but *be* a Quaker, it is all I want of him — But —— is no Quaker" —— (naming one of our profession) and I was sorry for the cause of his remark.

After some conversation, I mentioned that I did not wish to intrude further on his time, and rose to retire — "Oh no," says he, "you must take Coffee." I accordingly stopped. He was full of conversation respecting the siege of the Americans, and made it a very trifling thing. I then mentioned (the French Fleet being at that time before the Town) that twelve capital ships being before the Town we thought was much against them.

"To be sure," said he, "it is not very pleasant, but we do not mind them."

I then gladly got away. We applied to Major Winslow formerly of Plymouth to introduce us to Colonel Fanning who was the principal. When we mentioned our situation, that we were likely to be destroyed, the Colonel was very high, saying we might join the English then —— We observed that such a step would inevitably destroy us. —— "Well, said he, I have been destroyed also" — (I believe he was Governor of North Carolina at the beginning of the War) — Major Winslow endeavored to soften him by representing our peculiar situation, but there seemed little prospect of anything favorable when we parted. They had a Board of Refugees established, Colonel Fanning President, who would hear us when they met. We accordingly attended, and found Fanning very mild, and disposed to alleviate our sufferings — and as we proposed applying to the Commanders in New York, we

asked if they would put off their expedition, until they could know the result of our mission there.

Fanning thought this reasonable, and put the question to all the Principals there —— They readily agreed until it came to Leonard, who very reluctantly gave his assent.

We then proceeded to New York, and applied to the Commanders, Commodore Sir George Collier of the Navy, and Sir Henry Clinton of the Army. On representing our case to Sir George, he readily gave us an Order, forbidding any British armed Vessel to take any thing out of our harbor. This was a great relief.

I then laid before him the state of our captured seamen, that all the exchange of prisoners at that time was partial, that as we made no prisoners, we had none to exchange, consequently ours remained in the Prison Ships until they mostly died. On his understanding the reasonableness of the request, he ordered that

all our men should be released that were not taken in armed vessels (for such we had no right to apply) and that it should not be so in future as long as he had the command.

We also applied to Sir Henry Clinton through one of his Aids. (Major André that fine young man who lost his life as a Spy.) We could get no written order from him, but he intimated that he would direct that those in his department should not molest us, which no doubt he did, as they gave over their expedition, and we had a little quiet, until Sir George Collier's command was superceded by the arrival of Admiral Arbuthnot, and the shaving mills then came upon us.

Timothy Folger was then sent to New York, and he obtained a like Order as that from Sir George Collier. Added to this, he got Permits for a few vessels, about fifteen, to whale on our Coast, which were successful, but it was with great difficulty that distinction could be made between British and American armed

vessels, as the latter would make prize of us if British Permits were found.

I now come to the most trying scene in my experience during the War, — which was being with four others impeached for High Treason by Thomas Jenkins, where there was no step between being clear, and death.

The laws of this state at that time made it high treason for any person to go to a British Port without the consent of the Court.

We were well assured that if we applied we should be refused, and if we did not apply to the British, we should from every appearance be destroyed by them. Under serious consideration I was willing to be joined to the two others before mentioned and proceed, as with our lives in our hands. This was made one of the great charges among others in the Impeachment, a copy of which will be annexed.

We were examined before a Committee of the Court on the Impeachment, but knowing we were to appear again when the witnesses

THE ROTCH (ROACH) FLEET OFF THE COAST OF HAWAII

should attend, we made no defence, which we afterwards found was an error in judgment.

By this means the Court thought us guilty, and were about making out an Order to the Grand Jury, to find a Bill against us and commit us to Prison, which if it had taken place would have been in the severe winter of 1780.

But happily my much valued friend Walter Spooner Esqr, a member of the Court, just then arrived, perceived the business before the Court, and came to us for information. We told him we had reserved our defence for the second examination. He considered us in an error, and said we must send for Jenkins who resided at Lynn, and have another examination, and he would get the Court to stay their proceeding until this should be done.

We accordingly all met before the Committee, General Ward a worthy character in the Chair.

It was put to me first to answer to the high charges. (When I rose he politely told me I

need not rise — I thanked him, but my heart was so full that my tongue seemed incapable of utterance while sitting.) I answered to the charges in such a manner as fully to convince the Committee of our innocence — When it was finished, the Chairman, I have no doubt from a desire to put our minds at ease, asked me when we expected to return home — I replied that he could better judge of that than I could — (being now in custody) — He then asked me if I would take the supeneas for the witnesses to Nantucket, and deliver them to the sheriff. This was also to console our minds. I answered in the affirmative if he thought proper to entrust me with them. I accordingly took and delivered them.

In the spring following we appeared again with Twelve out of Twenty witnesses, who were all I could get to attend, and then had another full examination.

Before we entered upon it I desired liberty to ask Jenkins a question, which was granted.

Some of his friends had propagated a report, that I had offered him money, if he would withdraw his Complaint. I then put the question to him, whether I had ever made him any offer of the kind — But it irritated him — I therefore went no further in a question to him, but desired liberty to make my declaration, before we entered on the charges in the complaint, which was readily granted. I then said, "I now declare in the most solemn manner, that I never have, directly or indirectly, by myself, or by any person for me, proposed or offered one farthing to Thomas Jenkins to withdraw, or in any way to mitigate the charges in his complaint now exhibited."

I looked over the charges, and made my Defence Article by Article — and when I had gone through the whole, I observed to the Committee, that if I had not answered clearly to their satisfaction, if they would put any question that they thought would throw more light on the subject, I would answer it without

equivocation or mental reservation. The Chairman General Ward made me a low bow, and asked no question, by which they appeared satisfied.

They then took the Complaint, and examined the witnesses, one by one upon each charge — "What do you know of this Mr such a one?" (reading the Charge) "nothing" — and so to the next, and throughout the whole charges, and the whole Witnesses, when "nothing" was the universal answer, except from Marshall Jenkins — He began to tell what the Refugees told him at the Vineyard when they returned from Nantucket.

The Chairman stopped him, and said, "were you at Nantucket?" He answered "no" — "Then you can give no evidence."

One charge against me was corresponding with the Enemy. This correspondence was a letter given to Ebenezer Coffin, addressed to General Prescot, requesting the release of

his son, and assuring him that he had not been in an armed vessel.

This same Ebenezer acquainted his Brother Alexander that I had furnished him with this letter, who used his utmost against me.

The Committee were composed of the two Branches, the House and Senate, who reported to their several Departments. The House then took the vote and cleared us fully except one single vote. But the Senate in their vote held us — The House then desired the Senate to appoint a Committee of conference, and they would do the same. They met, and reported, each Branch adhering to their former vote.

Thus we were discharged by the House, and held by the Senate, (but not detained) and so it remained until we were set at liberty by the Peace.

In the Complaint I was charged with being the means of preventing a Brig which had much of Jenkins's property on board from

being re-taken — I suppose that was the case, by reasoning with the Owners of the Vessel then present.

The seven armed vessels had now gone over the Bar, and anchored, waiting for the flowing of the tide to take the Brig out — It was then suggested by some hot-headed men, that they could re-take her — I admitted it, but asked the Owners if it would be an even stake, observing "they have now got what they will take at this time, and if this vessel is stopped, it will bring the whole seven armed vessels into the harbor again, and no doubt the destruction of the Town will be the consequence" — For there was no effective force to prevent it. "If you (the Owners) will let her go, I am willing to contribute to the loss of Vessel and Goods on board, in the same proportion that I should pay in a Tax of equal amount" — A great number of people were present, who generally united in the proposal. The Owners let the Vessel go, and I con-

tributed Seven Hundred and Twenty dollars toward the loss of the property, which was more than double my proportion of a like Tax.

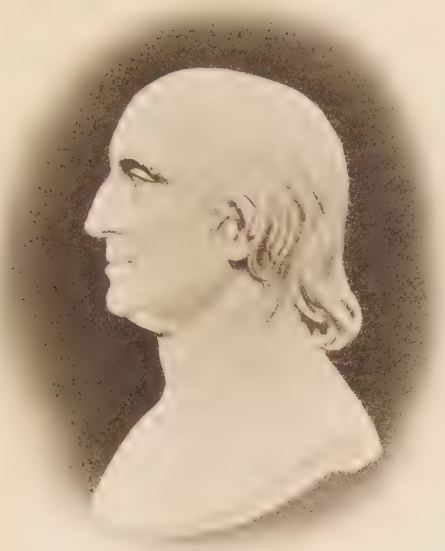
When this circumstance was known while we were in Boston, it raised great indignation against Jenkins, that such a charge should be in the Complaint, when I had made double compensation to what I ought.

In a conversation at the time of our examination with him, several others present, I understood him that I ought to make some concession. My answer was "if turning my hand over by way of concession, would withdraw the Complaint, I will never do it — If my innocence will not protect me, and my life should be taken, my blood will be required at thy hands" — This shocked him very much, but it did not last long, as he told some of his friends that he believed Samuel Starbuck and myself were clear. They then asked him why he did not take our names out of the Com-

plaint — He replied "because it suits me best to keep them in."

So callous a heart I hope is not often to be met with, thus playing with our lives as with a Tennis Ball. I am glad to leave this tragic scene and proceed ——

Some-time in the Year 1780 Admiral Arbuthnot returned to England, and Admiral Digby succeeded him. As soon as Arbuthnot was gone, those plundering Refugees were upon us again, our protection having ceased by his Departure. This renewed our perplexity. The Town was convened to consult about measures to prevent destruction —— The result was to send a Committee again to New York, to solicit an Order from Admiral Digby similar to that which we had before. It was proposed for me to go with two others. I had then been confined nearly nine months with the Rheumatism, had just left my crutches, and was hobbling about with a cane — Therefore I could not think of such an undertak-



WILLIAM ROTCH

ing. But all others utterly refused to go, unless I would accompany them. This brought a great straight on my mind —— To go I thought I could not, and to omit it seemed almost inevitable destruction. At last I consented, under great apprehension that I should not live to return. We accordingly set sail, and when we were off Rhode Island, I was obliged to have them go to the East side of the Island, and lay there several days, for my pain was so great that I could not bear the motion of the vessel —— But we got safe to New York in a few days after it abated.

Admiral Digby had arrived —— Commodore Affleck (since Admiral) still being there, and he having kindly assisted in getting the Permits for a few whaling vessels the year before, we applied first to him —— We asked him to introduce us to the Admiral, and assist us in procuring protection against their cruisers in our harbor, and some Permits for the Fishery.

He looked very stern, and said, "I don't

know how you can have the face to ask any indulgence of us — I assisted in getting Permits for you last year, which I have been very sorry for. I find that you have abused the confidence we placed in you, for Captain —— who cruised in Boston Bay and its vicinity told me that he could hardly find a vessel but what had the Permits, and you deserve no favor" &c &c — I heard him patiently through, while he was giving us such a lecture, knowing I could overthrow it all —— I then answered "Commodore Affleck thou hast been greatly imposed upon in this matter. I defy Captain —— to make such a declaration to my face. Those Permits were put into *my* hands —— I delivered them, taking receipts for each, to be returned to me at the end of the voyage, and an obligation that no transfer should be made, nor copies given. I received back all the Permits except two before I left home, and should probably have received those two on the day that I sailed. Now if any such duplicity has

been practiced, I am the person who is accountable, and I am now here to take the punishment such perfidy deserves."

He immediately became placid, and said, "You deserve favor. I am now going to the Admiral — do you be there in an hour" — We attended punctually —— He introduced us to the Admiral, and informed him that his predecessor Admiral Arbuthnot granted the people of Nantucket a few Permits for the Fishery last year, adding, "and I can assure your Excellency they have made no bad use of them."

Thus after a storm came a pleasant calm. We obtained an Order, as heretofore, respecting the property in our harbor, and Twenty four Permits for the Fishery — And I returned home much improved in my health.

It was necessary to secrete these Documents from American Cruisers, but such was the difficulty of distinguishing them, that two were presented to American armed vessels, who immediately took the vessels as prizes. This occa-

sioned us to pursue other means for the security of this small privilege, though a very useful one to us, which I shall mention hereafter.

We were now brought into the most eminent danger, which no human effort could check, much less prevent. Nothing short of the interposition of Divine Providence preserved us from apparent ruin. Several Sloops of War, and a number of Transports intended paying us a destructive visit. They were in sight of us in the day time three days, near Cape Poag (Martha's Vineyard) — They got under way three mornings successively, and stood for the Island with a fair wind, which each morning soon came round against them, and the tide by that time became unfavorable, which obliged them to return to their anchorage still in view of us.

Before they could make the fourth attempt, Orders came for their return to New York for some other Expedition.

Thus we were mercifully relieved for that time, after more fearful apprehension than any

we had before witnessed. Messengers were arriving one after another, and twice I was called up in the night with the disagreeable information that they were at hand. A solemn time indeed it was, and can never be obliterated from my memory while life and reason are vouchsafed.

We had a few restless Spirits amongst us, who were continually involving us in perplexity whenever opportunity offered. From a misrepresentation it was sometimes charged upon the Inhabitants at large, though without the least foundation, therefore this Armament was prepared to strip us of what could be found.

When this misrepresentation was discovered, those who authorized the Expedition appeared very glad that it was not executed.

I was one with ten men, and two Women friends, captured in going to our Quarterly meeting at Sandwich, by a British Privateer from New York. They had just before taken a Cedar Boat, and ordered us to depart in it im-

mediately, having first plundered us of what money they could find, but they took neither baggage nor provisions from us.

The Vessel was mine, and I pleaded earnestly for her, and sometimes nearly obtained a majority to give her to us— But another Can of Grog would be stirred up by those who would not consent to release her, and this never failed to gain several to their side. They repeatedly ordered us into the boat and to be gone, but we refused, still pleading for our vessel, 'till the Captain of the Privateer called to the Prize Master, to know why he did not send us away. He replied "they will not go." He then sent a furious fellow to drive us off. Samuel Starbuck and myself were standing together, he approached us with a violent countenance, and uplifted Cutlass, saying "Begone into the boat, or I'll cut your heads off." I looked him earnestly in the face, eye to eye, and with a pretty stern accent, said "I am not afraid of thy cutting *my* head off— We are prisoners, treat us

as such, and not talk of cutting our heads off."—He dropped his arm with his cutlass, and seemed very much struck at my boldness.

There were now two vessels coming rapidly in pursuit of them, and we thought it was time to be off. They soon retook our vessel, and pursued the Privateer, and took her, but the men left her in their boat, and got on shore on the Vineyard. They hunted them, and took all except that one who threatened to cut off our heads, and he made his escape.

Our vessel being retaken, I recovered her by paying salvage, as did a young man the most of his money, who had two hundred dollars taken from him.

I now return to the Permits granted us by Admiral Digby. The American Cruisers generally had knowledge of our whaling Vessels having them, therefore every deception and disguise was resorted to, to entrap them. They were too successful in drawing the Permit from two and taking them as prizes.

It was now evident that we could proceed no further without having Permits from *both* contending Powers. Accordingly the Town was convened, and Samuel Starbuck and myself were sent to Congress, to represent our distressed situation, an endeavor to obtain their permission, as well as that of the British for a few vessels.

We set off in mid-winter and arrived in Philadelphia where Congress was sitting. We opened our business first to General Lincoln, Samuel Osgood, Nathaniel Gorham, and Thomas Fitzsimmons. The first was Minister of War, the others were members of Congress. The last a great commercial man. To them we opened our whole business —— We drew up a Memorial but did not present it until we had an opportunity of stating our case, to the most influential members. Among them was President Madison, who as well as others, treated us with great civility, and seemed to take an interest in our sufferings.

We went to one of the Massachusetts Members, who resided in Boston. He was extremely prejudiced against us. I fell in with him alone, and conversed about two hours with him, endeavoring to impress him with our situation, and the necessity of our having the aid of Congress, but apparently with little effect. At last I asked him three questions, which were "is the whale fishery worth preserving to this Country?" — "Yes" — "Can it be preserved in the present state of things by any place except Nantucket?" — "No" — "Can we pursue it unless you and the British will both give us Permits?" — "No" — "Then pray where is the difficulty?" — Thus we parted. We reported this conversation to our beforementioned friends.

We had now drawn our Memorial, and desired them to look it over. They approved it, and advised us to get the same person to present it. Accordingly we repaired to his apartments, requested him to examine it, and

give us his judgment whether our statement appeared correct. He approved it — We then requested him to present it to Congress, if it was agreeable to him to do so — He accepted, and presented it accordingly. It was deliberated upon in Congress, and a disposition appeared to give their aid in its accomplishment. They eventually granted us Permits for Thirty five vessels for the Whale Fishery.

They were delivered to us, and the next day a Vessel arrived from Europe, bringing a rumor of a Provincial Treaty of Peace having been signed by our Ministers and the British Government, to take place when the Peace between England and France should be concluded. And it was not long before an official account of it reached Philadelphia.

Thus ended this destructive War, with the separation of the United States from Great Britain.

Our arduous labors, after five or six weeks attention, were now terminated, and might

have been spared, if we had apprehended Peace had been so near. The British were still to hold New York, and other Territories now ceded to the United States, for a limited time. I obtained liberty to proceed to that City to accomplish some business, and then returned home.

The happy return of Peace was now enjoyed in the United States, but poor Nantucket, whose distresses did not end with the War, though rejoiced at the event, still seemed doomed for a time to ruin in the Whale Fishery. Separated from Great Britain, the only market of any consequence for Sperm Oil, we were necessarily brought under the Alien Duty of 18 pounds Sterling pr Ton — A duty laid upon Aliens to encourage British Subjects. Such we then were, but this duty had its full force on us. Sperm Oil was sold at Nantucket after the Peace at 17 pounds Sterlg pr Ton, which before we were separated was worth nearly 30 pounds Sterling. 25 pounds

Sterling was necessary at that time to cover the expences, and leave a very moderate profit to the Owners. Thus a loss of nearly 8 pounds Sterlg pr Ton attended the business.

We continued it for two years at a certain loss, with a hope that some more favorable turn might take place. But no such prospect appearing, and the loss I had sustained by Captures in the Revolutionary War (about $60,000) had so reduced my property, that I found it necessary to seek some new expedient to prevent the loss of all. I found no probable alternative but to proceed to England, and endeavor to pursue the Fishery from there.

I accordingly took passage in the Ship Maria, William Mooers Master, accompanied by my son Benjamin, and sailed from Nantucket on the 4th of 7th month 1785. We had a fine passage of Twenty three days, five of which, having Easterly winds, we gained only one day's sail forward in that time. I proceeded to London, calling on my old friend Doctor Wil-

THE SHIP MARIA

liam Cooper at Rochester, (who with his family went to England in this same ship two years before) and requesting him to accompany me to London, which he kindly did.

When we reached Shooter's Hill, in full view of London, and Eight miles distant, forcibly feeling the great distance which separated me from my family, myself a stranger in that land, the occasion that drew me there, and the uncertainty of its answering any valuable purpose, I was overwhelmed with sorrow, and my spirits so depressed, that in looking toward that great City, no pleasant pictures were presented to my view. But I found it would not do to give way to despondence, reason resumed her empire, I was there, and something must be attempted.

We reached London, and I took lodgings for myself and my son Benjamin at Thomas Wagstaff's in Gracechurch Street. Our first Journey was to the West of England, in which we had the agreeable company of my friend

James Phillips. We visited the Sea Coast from Southampton, to Falmouth, in search of a good situation for the Whale Fishery, if we should conclude to form an Establishment on that Island. We found several Ports suitable for the purpose, but none that we preferred to Falmouth. In that large Harbor, there are several smaller, that would do well for the business. I had very favorable offers of divers places, but I was only on discovery, and did not wish to entangle myself with any. After viewing the Coast, and spending some days at Plymouth, we took a circuitous route, and returned to London. —— At Bristol I visited the Grave of my Brother Joseph, who died there Eighteen Years before.

My next Object was to know what encouragement we could obtain from the British Government.

My friend Robert Barclay perceiving what my business was, spoke to Harry Beaufoy, a Member of Parliament who introduced me to

the Chancellor of the Exchequer (the great William Pitt then about Twenty seven years of age.)

He received me politely, and heard me patiently. I laid before him our ruinous situation, saying "when the War begun, we declared against taking any part in it, and strenuously adhered to this determination, thus placing ourselves as a Neutral Island. Nevertheless you have taken from us about Two Hundred sail of Vessels, valued at 200,000 pounds Sterling, unjustly and illegally. Had that War been founded on a general Declaration against America, we should have been included in it, but it was predicated on a Rebellion, consequently none could be in Rebellion but such as were in arms, or those that were aiding such. We have done neither. As a proof of our being without the reach of your Declaration, you sent Commissioners to restore peace to America, in which any Province, County, Town &c that should make submission, and

receive pardon, should be reinstated in their former situation. As we had not offended, we had no submission to make, nor pardon to ask —and it is certainly very hard if we do not stand on better ground than those who have offended, consequently we remained a part of your Dominions until separated by the Peace."

This last sentence I pressed closely, wherever I could with propriety introduce it, knowing it was a material point.

After I had done he paused some time, and then answered to our remaining a part of their Dominions until separated by the Peace "most undoubtedly you are right Sir —— Now what can be done for you?"

I told him that in the present state of things, the principal part of our Inhabitants must leave the Island. — Some would go into the Country —— "A part" said I "wish to continue the Whale Fishery, wherever it can be pursued to advantage —— Therefore, my chief business is to lay our distressed situation, and the cause

of it, before this Nation, and to ascertain if the Fishery is considered an Object worth giving such encouragement for a removal to England, as the subject deserves."

Thus our conversation ended, and I withdrew with my friend H. Beaufoy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer could not be expected to attend to all applications, and I suppose he laid mine before the Privy Council, as the Secretary of the Council Stephen Cotterel sent me a note soon after this conversation, saying the Council would sit at an early day, when they would hear what I had to offer. I waited for that *early* day a month, and then applied to Secretary Cotterel to know what occasioned the delay——The answer was, that so much business lay before them, that they had not been able to attend to it, but would soon.

Thus I waited, not daring to leave Town lest I should be called for. This state of things continued more than four months, during

which time I received several, what I called unmeaning Court messages, "that they were sorry they had not been able to call for me" &c —

I then desired them to appoint some person for me to confer with, that the matter might be brought to a close. This was done — But unhappily Lord Hawksbury was the person. A greater Enemy to America, I believe, could not be found in that Body, nor hardly in the Nation.

I waited on him, and informed him what encouragement I thought would induce a removal, which I estimated at 100 pounds-Sterling transportation for a family of five persons, and 100 pounds settlement. Say 20,000 pounds — for a hundred families. "Oh!" "says he, this is a great sum, and at this time when we are endeavoring to economise in our expenditures." I replied, "Thou mayst think it a great sum for this Nation to pay, *I* think two thirds of it a great sum for you to have

taken from me as an Individual, unjustly and illegally." We had a long conversation, and I left him to call again, which I did in a few days.

I then added to my demand the liberty to bring in Thirty American Ships for the Fishery. "Oh no," said he, "that cannot be, our Carpenters must be employed." I mentioned that we had some Vessels that we possessed before the War — "Those can surely be admitted" — "No — they must be British built." —— "Will it be any advantage, if an Emigration takes place, for the Emigrants to bring property with them?" "Yes" — "If they can invest their property in Articles that will be worth double here to what they are there, will that be an additional advantage to this Country?" "Yes — certainly" — "Then why not bring ships, when two of ours will not cost more than one of yours?" — "Oh we don't make mercantile calculations, 't is Seamen we want" —— "Then surely two of our Ships will answer

your purpose better than one of yours, as they will make double the number of Seamen, which must be the very thing aimed at." He saw that he was in a Dilemma, which he could not reason himself out of, and struggled through with some violence.

He had now made his nice calculation of 87 pounds-10 for transportation, and settlement of a family — and says he, "I am about a Fishery Bill, and I want to come to something that I may insert it" &c. —— My answer was, "Thy offer is no Object, therefore go on with thy Fishery Bill, without any regard to me." I was then taking leave, and withdrawing —— "Well, Mr. Rotch, you 'll call on me again in two or three days." "I see no necessity for it" —— "But I desire you would" — "If it is thy desire perhaps I may call."

However, he let me rest but one day before he sent for me. He had the old story over again, but I told him it was unnecessary to enter again into the subject. I then informed

him that I had heard a rumor that Nantucket had agreed to furnish France with a quantity of Oil. He stepped to his Bureau, took out one of a file of papers, and pretended to read an entire contradiction, though I was satisfied there was not a line there on the subject.

I said, "it was only a vague report that I heard, and I cannot vouch for the truth of it —— But we are like drowning men, catching at every straw that passes by, therefore I am now determined to go to France, and see what it is — If there is any such contract, sufficient to retain us at Nantucket, neither you, nor any other Nation shall have us, and if it is insufficient, I will endeavor to enlarge it."

"Ah!" says he, "Quakers go to France?" —— "Yes," I replied, "but with regret." I then parted with Lord Hawksbury for the last time.

I immediately embarked with my Son for Dunkirk, where I drew up our proposals, and sent them to Paris, not wishing to proceed

further, until I found the disposition of the French Court. They sent for us to come immediately — We lost no time in answering the summons, and soon reached Paris. The Master of Requests who was the proper Minister to receive our proposals, and to make his remarks on the several Articles, had examined them, and made his remarks accordingly. The propositions were

1st A full and free enjoyment of our Religion, according to the principles of the people called Quakers ——

To which he annexed, "Accordé."

2nd An entire exemption from Military requisitions of every kind.

To this he annexed the following just remark, "as they are a peaceable people, and meddle not with the quarrels of Princes, neither internal nor external, this proposition may be granted."

The other propositions related to the regulation of the Whale Fishery.

We next proceeded to the several other Ministers at Versailles, five in number. First to Calone Comptroller of Finance — We gave our reasons for not taking off our hats on introduction, to them all — Calone replied, "I care nothing about your hats, if your hearts are right" — Next, to the aged Vergennes, Minister of Foreign affairs — Then to the Marshall DeCastre Minister of Marine — To the Prince of Reubec Generalissimo of Flanders — and last to —— the Intendant of Flanders, who all agreed to my proposals.

We then returned to Paris, and were to visit Versailles again, to take leave, according to the Etiquette of the Court. Before we set off one of the Ministers asked us if we did not wish to see the Palace. We excused ourselves, as we did not think curiosity would justify us, if our plain way would give any offence. While we remained in Paris we re-

ceived a note, saying the Minister had spoken to the King who gave full liberty for the Nantucket Friends (avoiding the name of Quakers when they found that it was given us in reproach) to visit the Palace, both its public and private apartments, when he was out (which was almost every day) —

To view the private Apartments was a great indulgence, not often granted except to persons of note. But unfavorably for us, the King did not happen to be out on the day we went to take leave, which was a disappointment, but we went through the public Apartments, and into the Chapel. When we hesitated at the latter, the Officer insisted on our entering in our own way, showing us every thing remarkable, and pointing out the places occupied by the Royal Family in time of Mass, &c ——

We now took leave and returned to London.

After I was gone to France Lord Hawksbury became alarmed, and enquired of Harry

Beaufoy if I was gone to France — He answered in the affirmative —— "Why is he gone there?" — "For what you or any other person would have gone —— You would not make him an offer worth his acceptance —— He will now try what can be done in France." Alexander Champion wrote to me, I suppose at Lord Hawksbury's request, to inform me that he had made provision in his Fishery Bill for us, and inserted liberty to bring in Forty Ships, instead of Thirty which I demanded, he having forgotten the number, but it was too late.

This letter was brought to our Apartments, and we understood the bearer to enquire, if a Dutch Gentleman resided there — He was answered in the negative, and my letter was lodged in a small letter Office, always an Appendage to the large Hotels. The very evening we left Paris it was brought to me.

We now returned to London, and I was

soon sent for by George Rose (I suppose father of the Minister lately sent to the United States) who was one of Pitt's Secretaries. He enquired if I had contracted with France — I told him, no — I did not come to make any Contract. Propositions were the extent of my business —— "You are then at liberty to agree with us — and I am authorised by Mr Pitt to tell you that you shall make your own terms."

I told him it was too late — "I made very moderate proposals to you, but could not obtain anything worth my notice —— I went to France, sent forward my proposals, which were doubly advantageous to what I had offered your Government —— They considered them but a short time, and on my arrival in Paris were ready to act. I had a separate interview with all the Ministers of State necessary to the subject (five in number) who all agreed to, and granted my demands. This was effected in five hours, when I had waited

to be called by your Privy Council more than four months." He still insisted that as I was not bound to France, I should make my own terms with *them*, but all in vain — the time had passed over. Lord Sheffield also sent for me on the same subject, but was soon convinced that it was too late. The minority came to me for materials to attack Lord Hawksbury, but I refused.

I now began to prepare for returning to my family. Accordingly I bought a good ship, and with William Mooers Master, we left the Downs the 11th of 10 month 1786 — After a tremendous passage of Sixty Eight days, in which we had twelve heavy storms, we arrived in Boston, and by way of Providence and Newport reached my own home on the 1st of 1st month 1787, and to my unspeakable comfort found my family well after an absence of Eighteen Months.

We next prepared to increase our Fishery in Dunkirk, and my Son Benjamin returned

there, to superintend the Business, he having become a partner with my son in law Samuel Rodman & myself.

After remaining at home nearly four Years, I thought it best to make another voyage, to assist my Son in our business at Dunkirk — And not expecting to return in less than three Years, a term too long to be separated from my family, I proposed to my Wife to go with me, and take our Daughters Lydia & Mary with us, to which she consented — and we also took with us my Son Benjamin's Wife and Child.

We sailed from New Bedford in the Ship Maria & Eliza, which I bought for the purpose, Abisha Haydon Master, on the 29th of 7th month 1790. We arrived at Dunkirk in Thirty Eight days, and found our Son Benjamin in health, and greatly rejoiced to receive his Wife and Child, as well as to see us.

Early in the Year 1791 I was called upon with my Son to attend the National Assembly

at Paris —— We were joined by John Marsillac in presenting a Petition to that Body for some privileges and exemptions connected with our religious principles.

The Petition was drawn by John Marsillac before we reached Paris, and notice given that it must be presented the next day.

On perusing it, we found some material alterations necessary. And in some instances it was difficult to express in French the alterations we made in English, without losing their force. My not understanding the French Language it was impossible to have such expressions inserted as I thought necessary —— And the time was so short, that we were obliged to let it pass with much fewer amendments than we wished.

The hour was come for presenting it, and the previous notice given of the Quaker Petition, I suppose drew every Member in Town to his seat. The Galleries for Spectators were filled, and many could not be accommodated,

nor did we wonder at their curiosity, considering the novelty of the Object.

We had been, with Brissot De Warville, Clavier, and some others looking over the Petition until the latest moment, and must now proceed to the Assembly. They with several others had come to accompany us, and just as we were moving, One observed, "You have no Cockades — You must put them on." We told them we could not — It was a distinguishing Badge that we could not make use of. "But," said they, "it is required by Law, to prevent distinction, that people may not be abused, for their lives are in danger without them, and there is always a large Body of the lower classes about the Assembly that we have to pass through." Our answer was, that we could not do it, whatever might be the consequence — That we were willing to go as far as we could, and if stopped, we must submit to it — We saw that our friends were full of fear for our safety. We set out under no

small apprehension, but trusting to that Power that can turn the hearts of Men as a water course is turned, we passed through this great Concourse without interruption, and reached the waiting room of the Assembly.

A Messenger informed the President of our arrival, and we were immediately called to the Bar.

John Marsillac read the Petition, with Brissot at his elbow, to correct him in his emphasis, which he frequently did, unperceived I believe except by us. At the close of every subject, there was a general clapping of hands, and the Officers whose business it was, endeavoring to hush them that the reading might proceed, this hushing I thought was hissing, from my ignorance of the language, and apprehended all was going wrong, until better informed.

After the reading was concluded, the President Mirabeau read his answer. The clapping was repeated at the end of every subject

— at the close, the President said — "The Assembly invites you to stay its Sitting."

As we were passing to the seats assigned us, a person touched Benjamin, and said, "I rejoice to see something of your principles brought before this Assembly." He did not know who it was. After we were seated, several Members came to us for conversation on the subject of our principles. We remained until the Assembly rose, and then retired to our lodgings.

We next found that a visit to the influential Members, in their private Hotels, was necessary, to impress them with the reasonableness of our requests. We accordingly proceeded, John Marsillac, Benjamin & myself, and met with a polite reception from all except two, and nothing more than a careless indifference from them. One was Bernard, a young man of good talents, but great vanity — At our approach he offered us no seats, but threw himself on his Sofa at great ease, which we were

told was his common attitude, when Applicants of much more consequence than we were came into his presence. The other was Tallyrand — After endeavoring to impress him with the foundation of our Petition, he made no reply, but let us pass silently away.

We generally found a number of persons with the members we visited, not of the Assembly, but Applicants, soliciting their interest for the different Objects they were pursuing — and the features of our Petition always led to an opportunity of opening our principles at large, particularly that respecting War. They invariably enquired and listened with great attention, and seldom was any opposition expressed. We had much conversation with Bishop Gregory, who was a very catholic man, liberal in his sentiments, and much esteemed —— and also with Rabant De St Etienne then Bishop of Autun. He was a very valuable man, and I believe was a blessing to many over whom he presided. He was one that fell a victim to

the Guillotine under the sanguinary Reign of Robespierre —— He inclined to converse much on non-resistance, and finally, thus summed up what he considered the view of its advocates, and of pure Christianity ——

"If an assassin comes, to take my life, and I conscientiously refrain from taking his to save it, I may trust some interposition for my deliverance. If however, no interposition appearing, I still refrain from precipitating a soul unprepared into Eternity, and he is suffered to effect his purpose on me, I may hope to find mercy for myself."

The Object of our Petition was of little consequence to me, whether granted or not compared with the opportunity we now had, of somewhat spreading the knowledge of our fundamental Principles, above all that of the Inward Light or Spirit of God in every man, as a primary Rule of Faith and Practice. We met with a number of serious persons, who were in great measure convinced of the rectitude of

CAPTURING A SPERM WHALE

our Faith, and they gathered to us at our Hotel one evening after another, one inviting others to come with them, until these social meetings in our apartments became exceedingly interesting. The conversation was almost wholly on religious subjects, and they always appeared well satisfied with the hours thus spent.

It was then a turbulent time in Paris, and much more so afterwards — Several of those valuable persons fell in the Reign of Terror, and others are beyond my knowledge, but the remembrance of those Evenings and of the feeling of divine influence that attended them I believe will never pass away.

One of our Visitors informed us that the Duchess of Bourbon was greatly interested in the principles we profess, and said if we wished to see her, he would make way for it — But Benjamin's business calling him home, and my not speaking the French Language, we could not accept the proffered interview. We therefore returned to Dunkirk.

In the course of the Year 1792 fresh trials awaited us. A great Insurrection took place in Dunkirk, founded on a rumor of the exportation of Corn — Several houses were attacked, their furniture totally destroyed, and the families, among whom were particular friends of ours, but just escaped with their lives. At last the Military were called in aid of the Civil Authority, and Fifteen of the Rioters were killed before they were quelled. The Head of one of these families escaped in disguise, and his Wife and Daughters were secretly conveyed to our house at midnight, whence before daybreak a friend escorted them on their journey to the Chateau of her Father Sixty miles distant. Martial Law was proclaimed, and wherever five men were seen together in the evening and night, Orders were given to fire upon them. It was indeed an awful time.

A great trial now assailed us, which I had anticipated with serious apprehension ——

That of an Illumination for the Victories of the French over the Austrians. The Illumination was announced as for tomorrow evening— Having very little time to consider what could be done, Benjn & myself thought best to go immediately to the Mayor and Magistrates then assembled, to inform them that we could not illuminate, and the cause —— That as we could take no part in War, we could not join in rejoicings for Victory. On opening the subject, they were much alarmed for our safety, and asked us what protection they could afford us. We replied "*that* is no part of *our* business — We only wish to place our refusal on the right ground, and to remove any apprehension that we are opposing the Government." "Well," said the Mayor, "keep to your principles — Your houses are your own — The Streets are ours — and we shall pursue such measures as we think proper for the peace of this Town." — We retired, though not without some fear that they would send an armed force.

Should this be the case, and any life be lost in endeavoring to protect us, I thought it would be insupportable. However they took another method, and sent men to erect a Frame before our house, and three other houses occupied by those of our Denomination, and hang a dozen Lamps upon it. The Mayor had also the great kindness to have a similar frame with Lamps, placed before his own house, in addition to the usual full illumination; and he once, and the Magistrates several times walked by our house, to see if all remained quiet — for they were under great apprehension. The evening being fine, and great numbers walking in the streets, they generally stopped to enquire why this singular kind of illumination, when they were informed by the person placed there by the Mayor for this purpose, and to take charge of the Lights. On his assuring them that we were not opposed to the Government, but were Quakers, they went on their way. We had all withdrawn into a back parlor where we spent the

evening, and thus passed this trying occasion unmolested.

A circumstance took place in the afternoon previous to the illumination, which I believe contributed in part to our remaining quiet. My Son was passing in the Street, and observed a number of men conversing very earnestly. One said, "If there are any Aristocrats who do not illuminate they will be destroyed." Benjamin then remarked to him, that he hoped that would not be the criterion to judge Aristocrats by, as he could not illuminate, and gave his reasons. The man who had been so earnest then addressed him thus — "I am glad I know your reasons, and I will endeavor all in my power to prevent your being injured."—— Another of the company said, "Mr Rotch, this man can do more with those people whom you have the most reason to fear, than any man in this Town" —— and I have no doubt that he used his influence with those very people. Thus we may frequently see a concurrence of circum-

stances in our preservation, which is by many attributed to chance —— I believe it is rather the watchful care of our Heavenly Father, however undeserving we may be.

Another Illumination took place soon after, when the same course was pursued towards us by the Mayor as before. A young man was passing our house late in the evening, when many lights in the Town were extinguished, and saw two men searching on the Ground. On enquiring what they were seeking, they said, "We are looking for something to demolish these windows — they are Aristocrats, and do not illuminate." He told them they must not molest us, that we were no Aristocrats, but were Quakers, whose religious principles forbade public rejoicings on any occasion, and persuaded the men away — Of this the young man's father informed us the next morning.

The next Illumination was on the arrival of Commissioners sent from Paris to stir up the

people to action —— My Son being absent, I requested Louis DeBacque to go with me to the Commissioners, and as my interpreter, give our reasons for taking no part in it.

We found them in one of the Forts, and after Louis had communicated what I wished, the Principal among them came to me, and taking me by the hand, desired we would do nothing contrary to our scruples on their account.

After some further friendly expressions, he turned to a large Body of people present, and thus addressed them — "We are now about establishing a Government on the same principles that William Penn the Quaker established Pennsylvania — and I find there are a few Quakers in this Town, whose religious principles do not admit of any public rejoicings, and I desire they may not be molested."

That same evening the Commissioners assembled the Town at the Town House, to address them on their public affairs, and in the

course of it, he took up our case again, and as before, desired we might not be molested, but protected. —— We afterwards found that several candles had been stuck around some pillars on the outside of our house, though we did not know it at the time.

This must have been done by Mechanics in our employ, several of whom on each of these occasions, passed much of the evening in walking before our houses to see if there was any service they could render, and telling those who enquired that we were Quakers and not Aristocrats.

In the beginning of 1793 I became fully aware that War between England and France would soon take place. Therefore it was time for me to leave the Country, in order to save our Vessels if captured by the English. I proceeded to England, two of them were captured, full of Oil, and condemned, but we recovered both by my being in England, where I arrived two weeks before the War took place.

My going to France to pursue the Whale Fishery so disappointed Lord Hawksbury, that he undertook to be revenged on me for his own folly, and I have no doubt gave directions to the Cruisers to take any of our Vessels that they met with going to France. When the Ospray was taken by a King's ship, the Officer who was sent on board to examine her papers, called to the Captain, and said, "You 'll take this Vessel in Sir, she belongs to Mr Rotch."

My Wife and family embarked secretly from Dunkirk with many Americans in a ship bound to America, and were landed in England, where I had the great comfort of receiving them four months after I left them in France.

Louis Sixteenth was Guillotined two days after I left that agitated Country — an event solemnly anticipated, and deeply deplored by many who dared not manifest what they felt.

We were now settled in London, where we

enjoyed the company of many old acquaintances and friends until the summer of 1794. My Son William sent the Ship Barclay, David Swain Master, to France with a Cargo, and ordered her from thence to London to take us to America.

We embarked the 24th of 7th month, had a long passage of Sixty One days, and arrived in Boston 23rd of 9th month 1794. The night before our arrival an awful circumstance took place during a Squall —— Calvin Swain, Brother of the Captain, fell from the main top sail yard into the long Boat, and was instantly killed.

We soon proceeded to New Bedford, and after spending a few days there, returned to our home at Nantucket, finding all our Children, and Grandchildren well that we left more than four years before, and six added in Samuel's and William's families.

We staid a Year at our old habitation, and then removed to New Bedford, where we have

NEW BEDFORD ABOUT 1800

William Rotch in his Chaise; his Mansion shown at the left

remained until now, when I have entered on my Eightieth Year.

Many occurrences I omit in giving the foregoing account, or they would swell this scrip to a considerable volume — When I take a retrospective view of this part of my life, of the dangers to which I have been exposed, and the numerous preservations I have witnessed, to be attributed to nothing but that Superintending Power, who is ever ready to succour the workmanship of his holy hand, it fills me with astonishment and admiration, and seeing my own unworthiness, I may exclaim with the Psalmist, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him!"

New Bedford 2nd mo 1814.

THE RESPECTFUL PETITION

OF THE

CHRISTIAN SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

CALLED QUAKERS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

Thursday 10*th February* 1791.

Respectable Legislators:

THE French Nation having appointed you her Legislators, and your hearts having been disposed to enact wise laws, we solicit the extension of your Justice and Benevolence to the Society of peaceable Christians to which we belong.

You know that in several States of Europe and North America, there are a great number of Christians known by the name of Quakers, who profess to serve God according to the an-

cient simplicity of the primitive Christian Church. Several Towns and villages of Languedoc contain a number of families attached to this primitive Christianity. Many other families, which came from America, have settled at Dunkirk, under the auspices of the late Government, in consequence of the invitation given to the Inhabitants of Nantucket, for the purpose of extending the French Fisheries. These Islanders have proved themselves worthy of your kindness by their success, and the same motive will induce them to continue to deserve it. Concerns, however, of far greater moment, have this day brought us before you.

In an Age signal for the increase of knowledge, you have been struck with this truth, that Conscience, the immediate relation of man with his Creator, cannot be subject to the power of man: and this principle of Justice hath induced you to decree a general liberty for all forms of worship. This is one of the noblest decrees of the French Legislature.

You have set a great Example to the Nations which continue to persecute for religion, and sooner or later, we hope, they will follow it.

We are come to implore this spirit of Justice, that we may be suffered, without molestation, to conform to some principles, and to use some forms, to which the great family of Friends called Quakers, have been inviolably attached ever since their rise.

Great persecutions have been inflicted on us, on account of one of these principles, but to no purpose. Providence hath enabled us to surmount them, without using violence. We mean the principle which forbids us to take arms, and kill men on any pretence; a principle consistent with the holy scriptures: "render not" (said Christ) "evil for evil, but do good to your enemies."

Would to Heaven this principle were universally adopted! All mankind becoming one family, would be brethren united by acts of

kindness — Generous Frenchmen, you are convinced of its truth; you have already begun to reduce it to practice; you have decreed never to defile your hands with blood in pursuit of conquest. This measure brings you,— it brings the whole world, a step towards universal peace. You cannot therefore behold with an unfriendly eye men who accelerate it by their example. They have proved in Pennsylvania, that vast Establishments may be formed, raised, and supported without military preparations, and without shedding human blood. We submit to your laws, and only desire the privilege of being here, as in other Countries, the Brethren of all men — never to take up arms against any. England and the United States of America, where our brethren are far more numerous than in France, allow us peaceably to follow this great principle of our religion, nor do they esteem us useless members of the Community.

We have another request to make, which we hope you will not refuse us; because it flows

from those principles of justice to which you do homage. In our registers of births, marriages and burials, we have preserved the simplicity of the primitive Church. Our maxims forbid useless forms, and limit us to those which are necessary for ascertaining the terms of human life, consistently with the good order of Society. We request that our simple registers may be deemed sufficient to legalize our marriages and births, and authenticate our deaths, by causing a declaration thereof to be made before a magistrate —

Finally, we request that we may be exempted from all Oaths, Christ having expressly forbidden them in these words, "You have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt perform thine Oaths; but I say unto you swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay."

Wise Legislators, you are persuaded as well as we, that an Oath is no assurance of sincerity; that it can give no additional force to the

declaration of an honest man, and does not deter a perjurer. You admit that an Oath is but a peculiar way of making a declaration, — as it were a peculiar mode of speech. We hope therefore you will not refuse to hear us in ours. It is that of our common Master — that of Christ. We trust that we shall not be suspected of a wish to evade the great purpose of the Civic Oath. We are earnest to declare in this place, that we will continue true to the Constitution which you have formed; we cherish and respect it, and it is our full purpose to follow its laws in all their purity; on the other hand, if our words, if our evidences are found to be false, we willingly submit to the penalties on false witnesses and perjurers.

Can you, respectable Legislators, hesitate to grant our request? Cast your eyes on the history of our Society, in the Countries in which we are established. More than a Century hath elapsed, and we have never been found in any

Conspiracy against the Government. Our temperate rule of life forbids ambition and luxury, and the purpose of our watchful Discipline is to preserve us in the practice of those manners, to which we were led by the exhortations and example of our Founder.

We esteem employment a duty enjoined on all: and this persuasion renders us active and industrious. In this respect therefore our Society may prove useful to France. By favoring us you encourage Industry. Industry now seeks those Countries where the honest industrious man will be under no apprehensions of seeing the produce of a Century of labor snatched away, in an instant, by the hand of persecution.

Now that France is becoming the Asylum of Liberty, of equal law and of brotherly kindness, and adds to these sources of prosperity, perfect liberty for every individual to obey the dictates of his conscience, in relation to the Almighty; — what prospects of advantage will arise to induce our Brethren who inhabit less

happy Climes, to settle in France, a Country favored by Nature, as soon as they learn that you have granted them the same civil and religious liberty which they enjoy in England and the United States of America.

Such is the respectful Petition we present to you, for the relief of our Brethren in France, and for the good of a Country which we love. We hope among your important engagements in reforming this Great Empire, and multiplying the sources of its happiness, you will extend your justice and regard to us and our Children: it will bring upon you the reward of the Almighty, and the love of virtuous men.

ANSWER
OF THE
PRESIDENT

QUAKERS, who have fled from Persecutors and Tyrants, cannot but address with confidence those Legislators who have, for the first time in France, made the rights of mankind the basis of law. And France, now reformed, France in the bosom of Peace, (which she will always consider herself bound to revere, and which she wishes to all other Nations) may become another happy Pennsylvania.

As a system of philanthropy, we admire your principles. They remind us that the Origin of every Society was a family united by its manners, its affections, and its wants, and doubtless those would certainly be the most sublime institutions, which would renew the

MIRABEAU

human race, and bring them back to this primitive and virtuous Original.

The examination of your principles, as a matter of opinion, no longer concerns us: we have decided on that point. There is a kind of property which no man would put into the common stock: the motions of his soul, the freedom of his thought. In this sacred domain, man is placed in a Hierarchy far above the social state. As Citizen, he must adopt a form of Government: — but as a thinking Being, the Universe is his Country.

As principles of Religion, your doctrines will not be the subject of our deliberation. The relation of every man with the Supreme Being is independent of all political institutions. Between God and the heart of man what Government would dare to interpose? —

As civil maxims, your claims must be submitted to the discussion of the Legislative Body. We will examine whether the forms you observe in order to ascertain births and

marriages, be sufficient to authenticate those descents which the division of property renders indispensable, independently of good customs.

We will consider whether a declaration, subject to the penalties against false witnesses and perjury, be not in fact an Oath.

Worthy Citizens, you have already taken that civic oath which every man deserving of freedom hath thought a privilege rather than a duty. You have not taken God to witness, but you have appealed to your consciences. And is not a pure conscience a Heaven without a cloud? Is not that part of man a ray of the Divinity?—

You also say that one of your religious Tenets forbids you to take up arms, or to kill, on any pretence whatsoever. It is certainly a noble philosophical principle, which thus does a kind of homage to humanity. But consider well, whether the defence of yourselves, and your equals, be not also a religious duty? You would otherwise be overpowered by Ty-

rants! — Since we have procured Liberty for you, and for ourselves, why should you refuse to preserve it?

Had your Brethren in Pennsylvania been less remote from the savages, would they have suffered their wives, their children, their parents to be massacred rather than resist? And are not stupid Tyrants, and ferocious Conquerors also Savages? —

The Assembly will, in its wisdom, consider all your requests. But whenever *I* meet a Quaker, I shall say,

My Brother, if thou hast a right to be free, thou hast a right to prevent any one from making thee a slave.

As thou lovest thy fellow-creature, suffer not a Tyrant to destroy him: it would be killing him thyself.

Thou desirest peace — but consider — weakness invites War — General resistance would prove an Universal Peace.

The Assembly invites you to stay its Sitting.

COPY OF
THOMAS JENKINS'S
COMPLAINT.

To the Honorable the Council, and the Honorable the House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, at Boston, Novr 1779.

Thomas Jenkins humbly sheweth —— That as a true and liege subject of the State of the Massachusetts Bay, as well as from enormous personal injuries received, he is most strongly urged to lay the following representation and complaint before the Supreme Legislature of the State.

Your petitioner complains of Dr Benjamin Tupper, Timothy Folger Esqr, William Rotch, Samuel Starbuck, and Kezia Coffin, all of the

Island of Nantucket, as persons dangerous, and inimical to the freedom and independence of this and the other United States of America; as Encouragers, Aiders and Abettors of the Enemy, in making inroads on the State Territories, and depredations on the property of the good subjects of this State.

It can be clearly proved (if your Honors should think fit to order an enquiry) that reiterated attempts have been made by some of the above persons, to induce the Inhabitants of said Island, to settle correspondence with, and openly join the Enemy.

In particular the said Timothy Folger applied to the Selectmen of the Town of Sherbourn, in a written request, subscribed with his own hand, to call a Convention of the Town, in order to choose a Committee to treat with the British Commanders at New York and Rhode Island; and also whether it was expedient for the Town any longer to pay Taxes to this State; and upon the said application being

reprobated by the Select men as highly prejudicial and inimical to the honor and interest of the State, said Folger declared that several of the principal Inhabitants of the Town were of his opinion; and then insolently told the Select men they deserved to be damned if they refused to comply with his proposal —

This treasonable proposition will be proved by the Select men. That there was a private Correspondence carried on by some or all of the aforesaid persons with the Enemy can be proved by the annexed list of Witnesses No 2 — and that the Commander of the predatory Fleet which came to Nantucket last spring, confessed that they never should have come there on the design they executed, had they not been repeatedly called upon and invited for the purpose, by the Friends to the British Government, in the infamous number of whom the persons above complained of were notoriously enrolled. Doctor Samuel Gelston will prove this confession.

That upon the arrival of the Renegado Fleet at the Bar of the harbor, the aforesaid Rotch and Folger together with one Josiah Barker, (without any appointment or consent of the Town) went on board the said Fleet, and after tarrying some time, came on shore in company with several of the principal Refugee Officers, and immediately went to the said Rotch's house, where, after calling in three or four other men of the same inimical character with themselves, a long consultation was held.

In about an hour the Council broke up, and one of the said Officers with a number of his people proceeded immediately to some Ware houses of your Complainant, and robbed him of — 260 barrels of Sperm Oil, 1800 lbs of Whale Bone, 2300 wt. of Iron, 1200 lbs of Coffee, 20,000 wt of Tobacco, and a number of smaller articles, all which they carried off, together with a Brig, one moiety of which he owned, to the loss of your Complainant, Twenty five hundred Guineas at least. — This property was pointed

out to them by the said Dr Tupper and Kezia Coffin. —— That other effects of the true and liege subjects of this State were particularly pointed out to the Enemy for plunder, by some of the persons above complained of, and especially by said Starbuck, can be amply proved.

—— Your Complainant begs leave further to add, that after the Enemy had got possession of his Brig above mentioned, frightened with a false alarm, they precipitately left the harbor, and the said Brig behind them, with only five men in her; upon which some of the well disposed Inhabitants proposed securing her, which might with ease have been effected; but the said Folger and Rotch with some others of the same complexion and sentiments interposed and dissuaded, and opposed the intention of the people; by means of which the said Brig and Cargo were finally carried off, after a Pilot was procured by the Enemy, who was induced to take charge of the vessel by the advice of the afore-

said William Rotch. —— To put the inimical and treasonable sentiments and designs of the said Dr Tupper beyond all dispute, after he had returned from New York, with said Starbuck and Rotch, where they had gone on an illegal and dangerous errand, upon a Town Meeting being convened, said Tupper after having menaced and abused all those persons, who had been opposed to the said Triumvirate going to New York, moved that a Committee should be chosen, for the purpose of seeing that the King's servants, meaning the adherents and officers of the British King, should receive suitable respect and protection and be kindly used, and that all refractory persons, (meaning such liege subjects of this State as were opposed to their traitorous proceedings) should be apprehended and sent where they would meet their punishment.

Innumerable other instances of the most dangerous and illegal conduct in some or all the persons now complained of can be pro-

duced, should your Honors think fit to order an enquiry to be made; which your Petitioner and Complainant humbly prays may be ordered, as well for the public interest, as that some reparation may be made him, and his other suffering brethren, who have sustained very heavy losses, by the cruel and treasonable management of those people; and that such Order may issue from your Honors as shall compel the persons charged as above, to answer to these Articles of complaint, and that summonses may be granted for the Witnesses whose names are herewith handed to your Honors, to attend at such time as your Honors shall order the enquiry to be made.

And your Petitioner as in duty bound shall ever pray. ——

(*Signed*) THOMAS JENKINS.

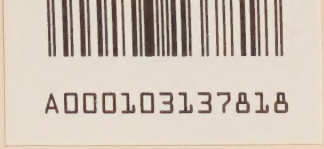
a true Copy
Attest John Avery DC.J. ——

WILLIAM ROTCH

Witnesses to the several Charges vizt.

JOHN WATERMAN
BENJN FOLGER
WALTER FOLGER
SHUBAEL BARNARD
PETER MACY
EBENEZER COFFIN
DOCR SAMUEL GELSTON
TIMOTHY FITCH (*Medford*)
SHUBAEL DOWNS (*Walpole*)
MARSHALL JENKINS (*M Vineyd*)
BENJN HUSSEY
STEPHEN HUSSEY
SETH JENKINS
SHUBAEL WORTH
STEPHEN FISH
PAUL PINKHAM
WILLIAM HAMMETT
JOHN RAMSOLE
GEORGE HUSSEY 2ND
FRANCIS CHASE

COPY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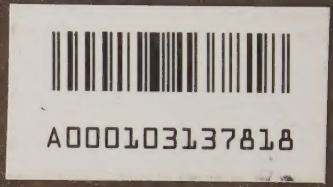
Rotch, William

Memorandum written by William Rotch in the eighteith year of his age.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